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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Secretary Council resolution 2299 (2016), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on progress made towards the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). It covers key developments related to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since the briefing of my Special Representative to the Security Council on 9 November 2016. My last report was issued on 25 October 2016 (S/2016/897).

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Political situation

2. In parallel with the ongoing military campaign against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Government of Iraq has been working on putting in place effective governance and security arrangements for post-liberation Ninawa. On 11 December, the Ninawa Provincial Council directed that all provincial government offices, many of which had been relocated to Erbil and Dahuk during the ISIL occupation, should move back to liberated areas of Ninawa. Provincial authorities resumed the delivery of services in retaken areas, with the Chair of the Provincial Council, Bashar Kiki, confirming on 23 November that provincial authorities had started working in the governorate to the extent that the security situation allowed. On the same day, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi affirmed in a session of the Council of Ministers that, upon liberation, Ninawa would be governed by civilian authorities. The Government also recommenced the recruitment of personnel for the Ninawa provincial police, with the intent of deploying them to secure liberated areas.

3. On 26 November, the Council of Representatives adopted the Popular Mobilization Commission Law, which establishes the popular mobilization forces as an independent military entity of the Iraqi armed forces under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, the Prime Minister. Of the 328 members of the Council of Representatives, 208 were present during the parliamentary session, including most

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of the members of the National Alliance and the Sadrist Movement and some members of the Kurdistan Alliance. The law was endorsed by all of those present. Some proponents of the law argued that it would guarantee livelihood and legal cover for the popular mobilization forces, while at the same time bringing them under the control of the Government. The majority of the Iraqi Forces Coalition boycotted the parliamentary session, arguing that after the defeat of ISIL there would be no need for maintaining military entities outside the ministries of defence and the interior. The Government is currently working out the modalities for implementing the law.

4. Discussions about national reconciliation in Iraq have been ongoing since the National Alliance, the Shi'a parliamentary bloc, adopted its National Settlement Initiative on 30 October. Political leaders from the Sunni component met on 26 November and 13 December to exchange views on national reconciliation. On 26 December, the Speaker of Parliament, Salim al-Jubouri, and a number of representatives from the Iraqi Forces Coalition met with a delegation from the National Alliance, including its Chair, Ammar al-Hakim, to discuss the post-ISIL phase, as well as national reconciliation. At a joint press conference after the meeting, the parties emphasized the importance of a unified Iraq and an inclusive national reconciliation process.

5. On 7 December, the Council of Representatives approved the 2017 Federal Budget Law. Key disputed issues included allocations for the popular mobilization forces and the Kurdistan Regional Government, as well as demands from southern governorates. Under the budget, total expenditures are estimated at $85 billion and total revenues at $67 billion, leaving an $18 billion deficit (or 21.6 per cent of the total budget). Planned oil exports are set at 3.75 million barrels per day, at a price of $42 per barrel. This target is in line with the decision taken by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries on 30 November, under which Iraq is committed to limiting its crude oil production level to 4.35 million barrels per day. On 5 December, the International Monetary Fund Executive Board completed its first review of the three-year stand-by arrangement for Iraq and disbursed a first amount of $618 million, noting that the revised fiscal programme in 2016 and the 2017 budget were aligned with the stand-by arrangement.

6. The 2017 federal budget sets the total number of popular mobilization forces elements at 122,000 and provides a total budget of $1.6 billion for the forces. According to the budget, the number of popular mobilization forces elements from governorates and areas affected by the armed conflict would be increased to ensure that each governorate is represented in a proportionate manner, while also maintaining a balance between the various communities within each governorate.

7. During the reporting period, lawmakers continued their deliberations on other important legislation, notably the draft components' rights law, formerly known as the minorities' rights law, and amendments to the General Amnesty Law of August 2016. Little progress was made in filling vacant ministerial positions in the ministries of defence, interior, finance, industry and trade. On 6 December, the Prime Minister announced that he would be putting forward nominations to the Council of Representatives for the vacant ministerial positions after it reconvened in January 2017. On 17 January, the Prime Minister appointed Abdul Razzaq al-Issa,

who is currently the Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research, as Acting Finance Minister.

8. On 10 November, the office of the three presidencies sent a letter to the Independent High Electoral Commission indicating that the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament had decided to postpone the Provincial Council elections, which were to be held in April 2017, to an undetermined date. In a letter to the Council of Representatives dated 24 November, the Commission indicated that it would be unable to conduct the Provincial Council elections in April 2017 as the Provincial Election Law had not yet been amended, internally displaced persons had not been duly registered and the necessary funds had not been allocated. The Commission further indicated that it could organize elections in the first half of September 2017, if adequate funding were provided without further delay. On 17 January, the Prime Minister confirmed to the Commission that the Provincial Council elections would take place on 16 September 2017.

9. The federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government have maintained close coordination and cooperation on the Mosul military operation, both through the Joint Coalition Coordination Centre in Erbil governorate and through regular and ad hoc high-level dialogue. The federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government resumed joint exportation of oil from Kirkuk governorate after reaching an agreement on 28 August to do so.

10. Concerning key outstanding issues between Baghdad and Erbil, the 2017 federal budget allocated a share of 17 per cent to the Kurdistan Regional Government, provided that it would export a total of 550,000 barrels per day of crude oil from the Kurdistan region of Iraq and Kirkuk governorate through the State Organization for the Marketing of Oil. This arrangement has been in place since 2015 but has not been implemented owing to disagreement over the modalities. The 2017 federal budget further stipulated that a census should be held in the Kurdistan region of Iraq in 2017 to determine the size of its population, which would constitute the basis for determining the size of its budget allocation. Furthermore, the 2017 federal budget stipulated that the Peshmerga would receive a percentage of the funds allocated to the Iraqi army, under a framework to be prepared in coordination between the General Command of the Iraqi Armed Forces and the Ministry of Peshmerga. On 8 December, the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Masoud Barzani, stated that the article could be interpreted in multiple ways and criticized some political parties of the Kurdistan region of Iraq for having supported the budget.

11. Efforts to overcome political disagreements within the Kurdistan region of Iraq and to reactivate the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, which has been inactive since 12 October 2015, have continued. On 20 November, President Barzani called for consultations between political parties on a comprehensive proposal that included the reactivation of the Regional Parliament, appointment of a Speaker, formation of a new cabinet and appointment of an interim President. Political parties, including the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Movement for Change (Gorran) responded positively to the proposal, and President Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party has since then engaged in bilateral consultations with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and other parties. The Kurdistan Regional Government announced on 5 December that it would have to implement additional austerity

measures in 2017 in order not to further increase the budget deficit. Meanwhile, teachers and other public sector employees in Sulaymaniyah governorate continued their protests, which began in October, regarding the non-payment of their salaries.

B. Security

12. The Iraqi security forces, the Peshmerga, the popular mobilization forces and local fighters, with support from the international counter-ISIL coalition, have made steady progress in the fight against ISIL since military operations to liberate Mosul and Ninawa commenced on 17 October. The Iraqi security forces crossed the city limits of east Mosul on 1 November and have liberated and cleared a large number of neighbourhoods since then, despite fierce resistance from ISIL in the form of direct and indirect fire and asymmetric attacks. On 29 December, the Iraqi security forces announced the commencement of the second phase of their operations in Mosul, with air and artillery support from the international counter-ISIL coalition. Operations to liberate and clear terrain south of Mosul, including the east bank of Sharqat, continue.

13. The popular mobilization forces captured Tall Afar airfield on 16 November, and on 23 November conquered strategic positions near Tall Afar along the highway stretching between Mosul and Raqqah, Syrian Arab Republic, adjacent to the Peshmerga front. As a result, Mosul has been fully cut off from ISIL territory in western Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 24 November, the Government of Iraq and the Popular Mobilization Commission confirmed in statements that the town of Tall Afar would be liberated exclusively by the Iraqi security forces and local fighters. The popular mobilization forces also launched operations west of Tall Afar in order to extend their control over supply and escape routes towards the Syrian Arab Republic.

14. ISIL has maintained control of the Hawijah district in Kirkuk governorate and areas in western Anbar governorate, as well as a limited presence in Ninawa, Salah al-Din and Diyala governorates, in particular in rural areas. The organization continued to conduct asymmetric terrorist attacks against government facilities and security forces positions. It increasingly targeted civilians, especially in Baghdad, where by the end of the year attacks had become an almost daily occurrence. On 2 January, 41 civilians were killed and 71 injured in three bombings. A vehicle-borne bomb that detonated on 17 November during a wedding celebration at the residence of a popular mobilization forces commander in Fallujah, Anbar governorate, reportedly killed 17 people and wounded another 35. On 24 November, a truck rigged with explosives detonated at a fuel station south of Hillah, Babil governorate, killing at least 56 civilians and wounding 21 others. Victims included dozens of local and foreign pilgrims returning from Arba'in commemorations in Karbala'.

C. Regional and international developments

15. Iraq continued to engage with countries in the region and the wider international community to secure political, military, humanitarian and financial support. It also engaged with neighbouring countries and relevant international

organizations to discuss political and economic cooperation. Iraq handed over the presidency of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to Mali on 1 January 2017.

16. Iraqi officials and political leaders undertook a number of senior-level regional visits with a view to expanding bilateral relationships, including in the area of trade, and garnering political and military support. The Speaker of Parliament visited Jordan between 15 and 17 November, where he met with King Abdullah II and several officials to discuss bilateral relations and regional stability. The Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, visited Ankara on 23 November, where he discussed Turkey-Kurdistan region of Iraq relations and the Mosul operation with the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the Prime Minister of Turkey, Binali Yıldırım. The Chancellor of the Security Council of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Masrour Barzani, visited Washington, D.C., between 5 and 9 December and met with the Vice-President of the United States of America, Joseph Biden, and several other officials to discuss the fight against ISIL. The Chair of the National Alliance, Ammar al-Hakim, visited Jordan on 7 December and Tehran between 11 and 17 December to participate in the International Conference on Islamic Unity. On both occasions, he discussed the National Settlement Initiative of the National Alliance, as well as regional developments and the fight against ISIL. On 19 December, a senior Iraqi political delegation, including Vice-President Osama al-Nujaifi, Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq and the Speaker of Parliament, Salim al-Jubouri, met with King Abdullah in Amman. Vice-President Iyad Allawi met separately with King Abdullah on the same day. At both meetings, the importance of maintaining a unified Iraq was emphasized.

17. Several foreign officials visited Iraq during the reporting period. On 14 November, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, received the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources of Jordan, Ibrahim Saif, to discuss the construction of gas and oil pipelines from Iraq to the Jordanian port of Aqabah. Between 1 and 3 December, the Minister of State at the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Rory Stewart, visited Iraq and met with President Masum in Baghdad and the President and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region of Iraq in Erbil. The Secretary of Defence of the United States, Ashton Carter, visited Erbil on 4 December and both Baghdad and Erbil on 11 December to discuss the fight against ISIL and post-liberation security arrangements with the Prime Minister of Iraq and the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

18. On 18 and 19 December, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg visited Baghdad and met with the Prime Minister and their Iraqi counterpart, as well as with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region of Iraq in Erbil. The Minister of National Defence of Canada, Harjit Sajjan, met with the Prime Minister of Iraq in Baghdad and with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region of Iraq in Erbil on 20 and 21 December, respectively. On 2 January, the President of France, François Hollande, accompanied by the Minister of Defence, Jean-Yves Le Drian, visited Iraq, where he met with the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament of Iraq in Baghdad, as well as with the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq in Erbil, to discuss the fight against ISIL and preparations for the post-liberation phase. On 8 January, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, visited Iraq and discussed

the protection of civilians and prisoners during armed conflict with the Prime Minister of Iraq and with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Between 8 and 10 January, the Minister of Defence, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Liliane Ploumen, of the Netherlands visited Iraq to discuss progress in the fight against ISIL and the humanitarian situation. On 9 January, the Prime Minister of Jordan, Hani al-Mulki, and an accompanying delegation visited Baghdad, where they discussed a wide range of issues with the Prime Minister of Iraq, including trade and cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

19. Iraq and Turkey continued to address the presence of Turkish troops in northern Iraq as well as Turkish concerns over the presence of members of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) near Sinjar, Ninawa governorate, through an intensive bilateral dialogue that culminated in the visit of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Binali Yıldırım, and an accompanying ministerial delegation to Baghdad on 7 January and to Erbil on 8 January. The visit resulted in a nine-point joint statement. In the statement, Iraq and Turkey agreed to promote security and stability as well as to fight terrorism together, while respecting each other's sovereignty. Both sides acknowledged that Ba'shiqah camp was an Iraqi facility, and in this regard Turkey reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. In addition, the two countries affirmed the importance of increased cooperation concerning trade, culture and tourism, as well as increased cooperation in managing the Tigris and Euphrates waters.

20. Turkish air strikes against PKK targets in the Kurdistan region of Iraq continued during the reporting period. On 27 and 29 November, Turkey targeted PKK positions in Dahuk and Erbil governorates. On 6 January, Turkey targeted PKK positions in Erbil governorate. No casualties were reported and the damage to properties and infrastructure remains unclear.

21. The sixth session of the Kuwait-Iraq Joint Ministerial Committee, aimed at further bolstering cooperation between the two countries, was held in Baghdad on 27 and 28 December. The First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, signed three memorandums of understanding covering security, industry and transportation, as well as a programme of work on cultural cooperation. In the subsequent high-level meetings with the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament of Iraq, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah reiterated his country's full support for Iraq's fight against terrorism, commending the progress achieved by the Iraqi security forces.

22. Leading members and supporters of the international counter-ISIL coalition met on 10 November in Copenhagen and on 17 November in Berlin as part of their quarterly schedule to discuss political, stabilization and humanitarian issues and to reflect on the strategic direction of the coalition. My Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Affairs joined both meetings and gave a presentation on progress in stabilizing newly liberated areas and on the humanitarian situation. Participants commended the Government of Iraq for its commitment to civilian protection during the Mosul liberation operation and praised the military gains of Iraq against ISIL.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

23. My Special Representative continued his engagement with government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of political parties, civil society and religious and community leaders to promote inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation. In all his meetings, he emphasized that reconciliation at the national and community levels would be needed in order to consolidate military progress against ISIL and to achieve sustainable peace. He called on political, community and tribal leaders to unify for a future in which all Iraqis could live together in equality, justice, peace and tolerance. He also highlighted the obligation to protect the rights of all Iraqi people in accordance with international law and to ensure justice for the victims of crimes and accountability for the perpetrators as an important part of rebuilding trust between communities.

24. My Special Representative continued his engagement with Iraqi parties, including with leaders from the Sunni component, on national reconciliation, notably on the National Settlement Initiative put forward by the National Alliance. He requested all parties to consider the Initiative, provide comments and develop a vision for national reconciliation. He also visited Jordan and Saudi Arabia and availed himself of opportunities provided by international security conferences in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain to solicit regional views and support for renewed national reconciliation efforts in Iraq, among other issues. In addition, UNAMI engaged at the grass-roots level, through a series of roundtables on national reconciliation, to solicit the views of community leaders, academics, youth, women and intellectuals across the country. The first three of six roundtables were held during November and December in Erbil, Fallujah and Karbala'. Similar efforts, coordinated through the joint reconciliation task force, are being undertaken by the United Nations country team, especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), focusing on community and social reconciliation.

25. In preparation for the post-ISIL period, my Special Representative has engaged widely with stakeholders from Ninawa governorate on its political future, including with women, and representatives of religious and ethnic minorities and civil society. Many representatives highlighted the importance of reinforcing existing provincial structures and the need to ensure the safe, voluntary and dignified return of internally displaced persons to their homes as a necessary prerequisite for reconciliation. Interlocutors at all levels stressed the need to strengthen and, where necessary, establish mechanisms to promote transitional justice and truth-telling, address grievances and ensure compensation as well as the provision of psychosocial services.

26. In an ongoing effort to facilitate dialogue between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, my Special Representative continued to meet regularly with representatives of both Governments and with relevant political leaders. He commended the unprecedented cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil

in the fight against ISIL and urged both parties to extend such cooperation to cover all outstanding political, economic and administrative issues. He also committed to providing his good offices to facilitate a resolution of the political and constitutional crisis in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

27. My Special Representative continued to discuss the presence of Turkish troops in northern Iraq and Turkish concerns over Tall Afar and Mosul with the Government of Iraq and Turkish interlocutors in Baghdad and during his trips abroad. He underscored the need to accelerate bilateral efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution that would fully respect the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of Iraq, while taking into account the security concerns of both countries.

28. As part of the outreach efforts undertaken by UNAMI, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral visited Basrah and Muthanna governorates between 8 and 10 January where he met with provincial officials and a number of tribal and civil society representatives. Discussions focused on the political, economic and security situation in the governorates as well as the issue of national reconciliation. The interlocutors requested the United Nations to strengthen its presence and expand its programmes in the governorates.

29. UNAMI continued its efforts to promote women's rights in Iraq in support of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). UNAMI engaged with the Government on the joint communiqué on prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq, which was signed on 23 September. On 27 November, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance participated in the Iraqi launch of the annual international 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence Campaign. Speaking at the launch in Baghdad, my Deputy Special Representative emphasized that the protection of women and girls should be central to all peacebuilding and justice-seeking efforts in the post-ISIL period, and called for the full participation of women in reconciliation processes at the national and community levels. He also underscored the importance of continued efforts to change negative social norms, end harmful practices and promote respect for the rights of women and girls, including through engagement with religious and community leaders.

30. On 2 December, as part of the promotion of cohesion, peaceful coexistence and national reconciliation, UNAMI marked the International Day for Tolerance with an event attended by a wide range of stakeholders, including religious and cultural leaders, diplomats, civil society representatives and youth groups. In his speech, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance underlined that the healing of the wounds inflicted by ISIL and previous conflicts could only be achieved by celebrating diversity and promoting the values of tolerance, unity and compassion.

31. As co-chairs of the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued to encourage the Government to establish an interministerial committee on grave violations of the rights of children to facilitate a direct dialogue between the United Nations, government representatives and other parties to discuss and address violations, action plans and conclusions of the Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict.

B. Electoral assistance

32. Amid discussions over the timing of the forthcoming elections, the Independent High Electoral Commission continued to conduct technical preparations for the Provincial Council elections with support from UNAMI. The Commission decided to extend the closure of biometric voter registration until 28 February 2017 to enable more Iraqis to visit registration centres. As at 29 December, 212 political parties had submitted their applications for registration in accordance with the August 2015 Political Parties Law, and the biometric data of over 9,041,000 voters had been updated in the voter registry database. The special registration process for internally displaced voters continued, with over 241,000 registered as at the same date. The Commission also commenced biometric voter registration of the security forces in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

33. Reform of the legal and institutional framework for elections remained on the parliamentary agenda. My Special Representative engaged on the matter with the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Legal Committee of the Council of Representatives and government and other political leaders. He urged that reform should take place soon to provide sufficient time for the Commission to prepare for the elections. He also stressed that an adequate budget needs to be provided to the Commission in a timely manner. UNAMI met on several occasions with the office of the three presidencies, which is formulating a draft amendment of the Council of Representatives Elections Law. While decisions on these matters remain the prerogative of Iraq, UNAMI continues to provide expert technical advice.

C. Human rights developments and activities

34. Armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continue to take a terrible toll in terms of loss of civilian lives and injuries. Between 10 November and 21 December, at least 710 civilian men, women and children were killed and at least 1,449 wounded, bringing the total number of civilian casualties in Iraq since the beginning of the armed conflict in January 2014 to at least 76,893 (26,646 killed and 50,274 wounded).

35. As more civilians are liberated from ISIL, the extent of the human rights violations committed is becoming evident. UNAMI has received innumerable reports of serious and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and gross abuses of human rights perpetrated by ISIL. The organization continued to use civilians and civilian infrastructure and private homes as shields. In contravention of international law, ISIL conducted organized terrorist activities directly targeting civilians, including shelling civilian locations and using snipers to kill civilians attempting to flee areas under its control.

36. ISIL carried out systematic forced transfers of civilians as it withdrew from areas in the face of the Iraqi security forces' advances during the Mosul operation. ISIL continued to forcibly move people from subdistricts around and inside Mosul. For example, on 9 November, ISIL reportedly forcibly moved 42 families from their homes in the Faysaliyah area of eastern Mosul to the western side of the city. On 25 November, ISIL reportedly ordered residents of the Tayaran and Jawsaq areas in southern Mosul to leave their homes within 24 hours. On 2 December, ISIL forcibly

displaced residents of the Barid area in eastern Mosul to the western part of the city. Witnesses informed UNAMI that many of these civilians were forced to accompany ISIL convoys transporting fighters and weapons, or were held in strategic locations where ISIL fighters were based.

37. The situation in Mosul is a serious concern. On 3 December, ISIL forcibly entered civilians' houses in the Kafa'at and Akha' neighbourhoods of eastern Mosul while ISIL fighters were deployed on the roofs of their houses to fire mortars on Iraqi security forces positions. The civilians were forced to stay in their houses. An unattributed mortar round reportedly hit a house in the Kafa'at neighbourhood, wounding two children. ISIL also threatened civilians with being used as human shields if they disobeyed its orders. For example on 12 and 13 November, ISIL reportedly ordered the residents of the Muharibin and Tahrir areas of eastern Mosul to leave their homes and move to downtown Mosul. ISIL told residents that non-compliance would result in the use of female family members as human shields.

38. ISIL carried out mass abductions of civilians, including former members of the Iraqi security forces and their families, persons whose family members had joined pro-government forces and others that it suspected of not supporting its ideology. For example, on 16 November, ISIL reportedly abducted 16 civilians in the Qadisiyah al-Ula area of eastern Mosul. The abductees were allegedly accused of cooperating with the Iraqi security forces. On 27 November, ISIL abducted 23 shopkeepers in the Bursa area of Mosul for allegedly raising food prices.

39. Scores of civilians have been killed by ISIL. In the evening of 9 November, ISIL shot and killed 20 civilians at the Ghabat military base. It then hung the victims' bodies at different intersections in the city, attaching placards to their chests stating, among other things, that the victims had used mobile phones to contact the Iraqi security forces. On 11 November, ISIL reportedly killed 12 civilians in the Bakr area of eastern Mosul for refusing to allow ISIL to install and launch rockets from the rooftops of their houses. On 25 November, ISIL killed 27 civilians in Muhandisin Park in northern Mosul for allegedly cooperating with the Iraqi security forces. On 29 November, ISIL reportedly shot and killed 13 civilians in the centre of Tall Afar for allegedly cooperating with government forces. ISIL reportedly paraded the victims around the city, threatening residents that such would be the fate of those cooperating with the Iraqi security forces.

40. ISIL has continued to recruit and use children. UNAMI has received reports from families in Mosul that ISIL has demanded that they surrender male children aged 10 years and above to fight for the group. ISIL also has reportedly been using children to carry out killings. On 9 November, the ISIL "Wilayat al-Jazeera media office" posted a disturbing video on social media showing four children, estimated to be between 10 to 12 years of age, shooting and killing four civilians for allegedly spying for the Iraqi security forces and the Peshmerga.

41. According to community sources, there may be 1,882 Yazidi women and children who remain in ISIL enslavement. ISIL allegedly brought an unspecified number of Yazidi women to Tall Afar in November, placed them in a school and sold some of them to its fighters. UNAMI continues to receive reports that Yazidi women and children are being relocated to various locations within Iraq and to Raqqah, Syrian Arab Republic.

42. As more territory is retaken from ISIL, mass graves continue to be uncovered. On 10 November, the Iraqi Federal Police discovered a mass grave on the grounds of the Agriculture College building in Hammam al-Alil subdistrict, Ninawa governorate, that was estimated to include at least 400 corpses, some of which belonged to women and children.

43. UNAMI also received a small number of reports of violations committed by government and pro-government forces, and has referred these cases to the Government of Iraq for investigation. UNAMI has reiterated that the Government must do its utmost to prevent such incidents from occurring and to investigate and hold accountable the perpetrators of such acts. UNAMI has also received reports of civilians being killed and injured as a result of government operations and air strikes carried out by the Iraqi and international counter-ISIL coalition air forces. For example, on 7 December, air strikes hit ISIL-held Qa'im, western Anbar, killing and wounding dozens of civilians. However, owing to the lack of direct access and the lack of reliable first-hand sources, UNAMI has not been able to determine the scale of such casualties.

44. Following the establishment on 6 June 2016 of a committee to investigate any violations and crimes committed against civilians in the course of the military operation in Fallujah, particularly the alleged disappearance of 643 men and teenage boys from Saqlawiyah in Anbar governorate, UNAMI continued to urge the Government to make public any findings by the committee, the steps taken to determine the whereabouts and conditions of any missing individuals and the measures implemented to hold the perpetrators to account. Despite requests by UNAMI, the Government has not yet released any information on the status of the committee or its findings.

45. The Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, co-chaired by UNAMI and UNICEF, received reports of 52 incidents of violence against children, affecting 803 children, between 10 November and 27 December. The majority of those incidents were reported to have taken place in the course of military operations in Ninawa, Salah al-Din and Kirkuk governorates. Of those incidents, 36, affecting 62 children, could be verified at the time of preparation of the present report. Killing and maiming continued to be the most reported violations, with 24 children confirmed killed and 38 maimed. Reports of another 9 children killed and 28 maimed remain under verification. The Task Force also received information concerning two incidents of attacks on schools and three on hospitals during the reporting period, while four incidents of military use of schools and one of military use of hospitals were reported. Four cases of recruitment and use of children were reported, none of which could be verified.

46. UNAMI continues to undertake vigorous advocacy with the Government of Iraq to ensure that the protection of civilians from the effects of armed conflict is at the forefront of the planning of military operations. On a number of occasions, the Prime Minister of Iraq publicly reiterated his Government's commitment to the protection of civilians and to ensuring justice and accountability for any human rights violations and abuses committed in relation to the conflict.

47. In this context, the Government of Iraq has announced that security screening of civilians fleeing ISIL areas would be conducted only by lawfully authorized authorities in clearly identified locations and would be conducted in a transparent

manner. The United Nations continues to monitor the screening process by visiting screening sites to observe the process, engaging with officials to raise any concerns noted during such visits and meeting with Iraqis who have been subject to vetting to learn of their experiences.

48. The Iraqi authorities reportedly continued to carry out death sentences. On 24 November, eight prisoners convicted of terrorism-related crimes were reportedly executed in the Nasiriyah prison in Dhi Qar governorate. The executions were not confirmed publicly by the Iraqi authorities, raising concerns about transparency in the administration of justice in conformity with international standards. The United Nations has repeatedly called on the Government of Iraq to impose a moratorium on all death sentences and executions.

49. On 26 December, Iraqi journalist Afrah Shawqi was abducted from her home by unidentified gunmen. The following day, the Prime Minister called for an investigation of the incident and for prosecution of the perpetrators. Ms. Shawqi was released on 3 January.

D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

50. Since the beginning of the Mosul military operation on 17 October, more than 115,000 people, nearly half of them children under 18 years of age, had fled the fighting as at 27 December, with the overwhelming majority seeking safety in more than 20 emergency sites and camps run by the Government of Iraq, the United Nations and partners. It has been estimated that close to 1.2 million civilians remain in the city. They are at extreme risk, especially the 400,000 to 500,000 people in the densely populated sections of Mosul, where some of the most difficult and intense fighting is still likely to occur. Children are particularly vulnerable to injury, death and denial of access to basic rights, including health care and education.

51. The number of civilian trauma casualties is rising rapidly. On average, 700 people per week were referred to Erbil hospitals owing to injuries and nearly 40 per cent of them were civilians. The nature of the injuries, which included young children and women shot in the face, chest and neck, suggested a clear pattern of direct targeting. While all government forces involved in the Mosul military operation continued to prioritize protection of civilians, ISIL deliberately targeted civilians and used them as human shields. With fighting intensifying, humanitarian partners are preparing for the possibility of a prolonged siege, an increase in mass casualties, hunger and widespread deprivation.

52. Conflict and insecurity continued to displace people in other parts of Iraq, including Kirkuk governorate. Between 9 November and 27 December, almost 17,000 people, half of them children, fled the Hawijah district. Forced evictions significantly decreased during the reporting period; however, identification documents continued to be confiscated, restricting people's freedom of movement and access to services.

53. Despite difficult operating conditions, the United Nations and partners continued to work around the clock to support the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to respond to the humanitarian crisis. Humanitarian agencies provided assistance to more than 2 million vulnerable civilians across Iraq

each month, including displaced persons, families returning home and people living in host communities. Partners reduced their response times and provided life-saving emergency aid close to the front lines on an almost daily basis.

54. Since the Mosul military operations began, partners have provided emergency packages containing food, water, purification tablets, high energy biscuits and hygiene and dignity items to 356,000 people within 48 hours of their displacement, or, for those who were not displaced, as soon as areas became accessible. By 27 December, more than 83,000 people were living in camps and emergency sites near Mosul, supported by humanitarian partners. Tented schools were open, providing for more than 9,000 newly displaced school-age children, and protection services were provided to 128,000 displaced people, including psychosocial support for 14,000 children.

55. The Mine Action Service of the United Nations and its partners continued to minimize the impact of explosive hazard contamination by surveying and clearing areas and conducting risk awareness. Between 27 October and 27 December, the Service participated in 50 United Nations inter-agency assessment missions and missions led by non-governmental organizations in Sharqat (Salah al-Din governorate) and in Qayyarah and Shurah (both part of Ninawa governorate) to determine appropriate locations for displacement camp sites and to facilitate the distribution of aid.

56. Despite generous donations, major gaps still exist in the humanitarian response. The Mosul flash appeal, launched in July to prepare ahead of the military operations, received $235 million, or 83 per cent of the $284 million requested. The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan received $676 million, 80 per cent of the $861 million requirement, to support 7.3 million vulnerable Iraqis. Recognizing the scale of the need for continued humanitarian assistance, partners have prepared a Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017 targeting 5.8 million of the nearly 11 million Iraqis who will require some form of assistance in the year ahead.

57. In a positive development, people continued to return in large numbers to newly liberated areas. More than 1.2 million people have returned to their homes in the last 18 months, including approximately 500,000 people who have returned to Ramadi, Fallujah and Karmah in Anbar governorate. A total of 574,000 have returned to Anbar governorate, 366,000 to Salah al-Din governorate, 193,000 to Diyala governorate and 181,000 to Ninawa governorate.

58. Immediate stabilization support to towns and cities liberated from ISIL continued to expand during the reporting period. The UNDP Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization is currently operational in 18 liberated towns and districts and has expanded operations in Hadithah, Hit, Rutbah (Anbar governorate), Sharqat (Salah al-Din governorate) and in areas outside Mosul city (Ninawa governorate). More than 320 projects are simultaneously under way in Anbar, Ninawa, Salah al-Din and Diyala governorates aimed at rehabilitating basic grids, putting people to work, helping businesses reopen, boosting government capacity and facilitating community-level reconciliation. The first projects under the expanded stabilization channel of the Funding Facility are expected to start in early 2017. They are aimed at rehabilitating medium-sized public institutions, which generate large numbers of jobs in newly liberated cities, and stabilizing the agricultural, transport and electrical corridors between liberated districts. In preparation for the liberation of

Mosul, the Funding Facility is pre-positioning equipment worth $40 million, including electrical supplies, water treatment equipment and health equipment, and is recruiting teams of planners, engineers and technicians to deploy into each of the city's eight subdistricts as soon as they are liberated. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and UNICEF are also working in newly liberated areas, rebuilding agricultural systems, helping destitute families repair damaged homes and supporting education. A number of humanitarian agencies, including the World Food Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, are assisting returning families. The Mine Action Service has helped to ensure that 10,000 people returning to their homes in Anbar governorate received risk awareness messages in displacement camps and schools.

59. Under the leadership of the office of the Prime Minister, UNDP worked to strengthen the capacity of the Federal Integrity Commission to investigate high-profile corruption cases pursuant to the agreement signed with the federal Government in August 2016. These efforts have been part of the Government's overall agenda to combat corruption and reinforce its reform agenda. Intensive investigations are under way on five corruption cases that involve misuse of national assets worth hundreds of millions of dollars. More cases will be investigated in 2017. In addition, an assessment was carried out of the effectiveness of the General Inspector Offices in the prevention of corruption.

60. Discussions are already under way with the Government to revise the United Nations Development Assistance Framework as soon as ISIL is expelled from the country. Working groups on preventing violent extremism, promoting social protection, curbing community-level violence and restoring education and health services will accelerate their work in the first quarter of 2017, with the intention of finalizing a new framework by midyear.

E. Security and operational issues

61. The United Nations in Iraq continues to work in a high-risk and highly fluid security environment and to implement programmes and activities based on programme criticality. Demands for humanitarian assistance and immediate stabilization continue to increase as more areas are regained from ISIL control. ISIL continues to employ asymmetric attacks against security forces and civilian targets across Iraq, and United Nations programmes and personnel remain at a high risk of collateral damage. A security support cell was activated in Erbil to support humanitarian activities related to the Mosul operations. From 10 November to 23 December, 134 missions were conducted, including 6 at very high and 70 at high residual risk. The United Nations security management system continues to work closely with relevant security agencies to ensure that appropriate security measures remain in place during all missions.

62. The construction of a new integrated compound in Baghdad is ongoing. Over 100 residential accommodations are under construction and expected to be completed by June 2017. In addition, a further 100 accommodation units and 250 office spaces are at the planning stage. Similar efforts are being undertaken in Erbil to support the current humanitarian surge and future requirements.

IV. Observations

63. Sustainable peace and stability in Iraq can only be achieved through genuine dialogue conducted in a spirit of cooperation, compromise and mutual respect. As I have stated elsewhere, only inclusive political solutions can ensure enduring and sustainable peace and security.

64. I therefore welcome the National Settlement Initiative of the National Alliance, with its stated objective for Iraq to be "a common house for all its people and all components". The initiative has triggered a broad discussion on national settlement within Iraqi political and social circles. Many groups, including the main Iraqi components, civil society and minority communities are preparing similar position papers and initiatives. My Special Representative has commenced broad consultations on a national settlement to foster support for national reconciliation, both inside Iraq and in the region.

65. Peace, stability and prosperity for all Iraqis can only be achieved on the basis of equal rights, opportunities, accountability and justice for all. I encourage leaders of all communities and groups to embrace a spirit of partnership and equality, genuine goodwill and adherence to a give-and-take approach, and to present their views and visions for national reconciliation and work closely with my Special Representative towards this objective. I also urge and welcome the support of countries of the region for national settlement.

66. With progress in the Mosul liberation operation, it is increasingly important to ensure adequate governance and security arrangements for Ninawa, which are vital prerequisites for the peaceful interaction among all components in the governorate and the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons to their homes. I take note of and support the Prime Minister's encouragement of the provincial authorities to resume their responsibilities and return to Ninawa governorate to the extent possible, as well as his commitment to mobilizing and providing all the support necessary from the federal Government.

67. I am pleased with the level of coordination and cooperation between the Iraqi security forces and the Peshmerga, and commend the Prime Minister of Iraq and the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq for their efforts in this regard. This provides a sound basis for cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil on a range of other political and governance issues, which will be critical during the post-ISIL phase. A long-term joint vision and the ability to put forward durable solutions to outstanding issues would benefit all Iraqi communities. I urge the two leaders to engage in concerted dialogue on outstanding issues, including oil exports and revenue-sharing, as well as on the matters of the disputed internal boundaries and the return of internally displaced persons to their places of origin, in accordance with humanitarian and human rights principles.

68. I am concerned that despite the intensified efforts of political leaders in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the political impasse has persisted. I welcome President Barzani's political initiative of 20 November, and I reiterate my call on the political leaders of the Kurdistan region of Iraq to engage in dialogue, end the political stalemate expeditiously and normalize the functioning of the Kurdistan Regional

Parliament and the Kurdistan Regional Government, to resolve the issue of the Presidency.

69. I am encouraged by the increasingly productive dialogue between the Governments of Iraq and Turkey to identify a mutually acceptable solution regarding the presence of Turkish troops in northern Iraq that fully respects the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of Iraq, meets both countries' security concerns and ensures that all activities conducted in Iraq are undertaken in coordination with and with the full agreement of the Government of Iraq.

70. While military operations against ISIL are showing good progress, Iraqi citizens continue to call for better service delivery, fair and equal treatment, and transparent governance devoid of corruption, political patronage and nepotism. Notwithstanding some encouraging steps in this regard, further substantive progress on the Government's reform agenda is required. I urge the political blocs, civil society and other stakeholders to cooperate with the Prime Minister to accelerate this process.

71. I also underscore the importance of women's participation in decision-making spanning the entire spectrum of relevant issues, from stabilization and reconstruction to transition plans and national reconciliation. I urge the Government of Iraq to implement fully the joint communiqué on prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq.

72. I welcome the progress on the legislative agenda, in particular the timely passage of the 2017 Federal Budget Law. I take note of the adoption of the Popular Mobilization Commission Law, which provides a legal framework for the popular mobilization forces. I urge political blocs to move forward and to reach an understanding on the modalities for implementing the law, with the aim of accommodating the concerns of all sides. I call upon the Government and the Council of Representatives to redouble their efforts to pass outstanding legislation, including the justice and accountability law and the components' rights law.

73. I also take this opportunity to call upon Iraqi leaders to ensure that an appropriate legal and institutional framework for the elections is put in place in a timely manner to facilitate the operational planning of the Independent High Electoral Commission. I urge adherence to the principle of inclusivity and the promotion of women's active participation in politics. The United Nations stands ready to provide any technical assistance required.

74. I commend the Government for the steps it has taken to ensure that the protection of civilians is at the forefront of military planning and in the conduct of anti-ISIL operations. I reiterate my call on the Government and all supporting parties to remain vigilant and to do their utmost to ensure that the rights of civilians are protected during operations. I urge the Government to investigate any reported violations of humanitarian and human rights laws and norms, bring perpetrators to justice and deal with such issues with the transparency necessary to instil confidence that no violation will remain unanswered. I urge all forces involved in the Mosul campaign to observe international human rights standards with regard to detainees suspected of terrorism and support to ISIL, so as to create an atmosphere conducive to social reconciliation in the post-ISIL period. It is also critical that the

international community support the Government's attempts to ensure that any individual committing crimes is properly held to account. Failure to do so will only deepen tensions and prevent long-term community and national reconciliation.

75. I am concerned about the toll that the armed conflict has taken on civilians and the corrosive effect the violence has on a range of fundamental human rights. Women and children, people with disabilities, members of diverse ethnic and religious communities and older persons continue to be severely affected by armed conflict, terrorism and violence. Women, and particularly those who are members of minority ethnic and religious communities, continue to be targeted for crimes by ISIL. There are credible reports of ISIL committing organized, systematic and gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by using civilians to shield its fighters or places of strategic interest from attacks by Government forces or to ensure maximum civilian casualties as a result of military operations. I condemn these cowardly actions by ISIL in the strongest possible terms.

76. Iraq also continues to face challenges in terms of access to justice, compliance with due process and fair trials standards, lack of equal access to basic services, and issues relating to respect and protection of the rights of women, children, people with disabilities, diverse ethnic and religious communities and journalists and people of other professions. I emphasize that it is fundamentally important to address the human rights and rule of law issues that are the root causes of ongoing cycles of violence. It will be essential to seek to rebuild trust within and between communities by focusing on common human rights issues, such as access to justice and basic services and formal and informal justice mechanisms that ensure the care and protection of the victims and survivors of human rights violations and abuses, as well as the accountability of the perpetrators of such crimes. It will also be crucial to assist communities devastated by violence by ensuring that all displaced persons can return to their places of origin in dignity and safety and in full compliance with applicable humanitarian standards and providing for programmes that assist in the rebuilding and reconstruction of such communities.

77. I commend donors for their contributions to humanitarian operations, but note with concern that funding levels still fall far short of requirements. The Humanitarian Response Plan in Iraq is one of the most highly prioritized plans for the United Nations; any shortfall forces agencies and partners to cut back on or close life-saving programmes. Many critical operations, including approximately 400 front-line health clinics, had to be closed during 2016 owing to a lack of funding. Given that millions of Iraqi civilians are dependent on humanitarian support, including the more than 1 million estimated to be trapped in Mosul, I call upon Member States to redouble their efforts to generously fund humanitarian programmes throughout the country.

78. I am encouraged by the efforts of the Government, supported by Member States and the United Nations, to facilitate the return of more than 1 million Iraqis to newly liberated areas. I am aware that up to 4 million Iraqis may be displaced from their homes by the end of the conflict and concerned that social reconciliation will be delayed unless communities are rebuilt. Accordingly, I call for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of families and underline the importance of moving beyond immediate stabilization to the full restoration of services, the revitalization of the economy and the formulation of the structural reforms necessary to ensure

that Iraq continues on its path towards peace, stability, prosperity and sustainable development.

79. Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my Special Representative for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, my two Deputy Special Representatives and all the United Nations national and international staff in Iraq for their dedicated efforts to fulfil the United Nations mandate in Iraq under challenging circumstances.